



The 19th ATCA Conference begins

The many individuals that represent the advertising companies, vacation wholesalers, and resorts are in Aruba for two intensive days of meetings with staff of AHATA (Aruba Hotel and Tourism Association) and ATA (Aruba Tourism Authority.) This combined partnership of marketing pundits and executives is what decides the island's promotional policy for the coming years and beyond. It is a meeting of minds, combining experience and marketing savvy with the latest research results to put Aruba on a successful course of marketing its tourism product.

On Tuesday morning, key individuals representing Aruba met with the press to explain some of the things that are being considered for this marketing plan. This is of interest to the Aruban public, as the steps taken by Aruba's authorities affect the livelihood of all that live here, and the economic success of the island.

Present at Tuesday's meeting were Jorge Pesquera, Director of AHATA, and Ewald Biemans, General Manager of the Bucuti Resort, and President of the AHATA board. Joining them on the panel was the new Senior Director of Marketing, Stephen K. Tipword, taking over for Scott Wiggins. Representing the government was the Minister of Tourism, Edison Brieson, and Myrna Jansen-Feliciano, Director of the ATA, and Marketing Director Frits Israel.

This year, over 170 participants have gathered to for two days of networking and deal making, followed by the usual "marketing retreat," which is being held for the first time in Aruba. The island welcomes representatives of mega-vacation providers such as Mark Benson of Liberty/Gogo Tours and online wholesalers Expedia.

During the press conference at the Renaissance Convention Center in Oranjestad, Ms. Jansen revealed that the marketing partnership is focusing on "product branding" and a definitive direction which best exemplifies the Aruban tourist product, and work to give a "one voice message to all our customers."

Jorge Pesquera stated that part of the plan is not only to decide on a direction, but also to see that all those involved in tourism conform to that direction. His meaning was that a marketing plan can be devised, but those that live work directly in tourism and island visitors must also conform to the standards of the marketing plan, delivering the best product possible.

Minister Brieson stated that "A mission will be decided upon and implemented by September offering a new format of more information for tourists." He indicated that marketing plans include taking greater advantage of modern technology, and that a point of the 19th ATCA conference is that "there must be change for moving into a new Aruba. This year is a turning point for us in government. 110,000 people that live in Aruba; they can be a part of the success, or a part of the failure. I have never like being on a losing team."

From June 5 to 7 the Westin Aruba Resort will be host to the ATCA activities, including the General Sessions and Market Place. These include general sessions with presentations by Frits Israel, Steve Tipword, May Ras-Speijer of AHATA, and also Director of the Aruba Airport Authority (AAA) Peter Steinmetz, with Peggy Croes, AAA Director of Marketing. The traditional market place has been transformed into private meeting session employing the entire 17th floor of the Westin Resort, allowing tourism executives to discuss issues in a more relaxed and private venue.

The main point brought out during the introduction to ATCA was that there will be a closer relationship between the public and private sector of Aruba's tourism organizations, with a substantial financial commitment on the part of AHATA. All parties are very enthusiastic and optimistic about the results of this partnership, and what they expect will be the results of this very important conference. On a final note, they offered gratitude to Rob Smith, and Pat Donovan of the Westin Aruba Resort, and Warren Stanley of Atlantis Submarines and the tireless efforts of Amy Ras-Speijer in making the realization of the 19th ATCA Conference a success.